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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to propose a conceptual framework by which educators can recognize, affirm, and enhance the potential to learning of a vast array of urban resources unconnected to schools. Working definitions of the major terms "educators," "resources," and "urban" are provided as a reference base for the conceptual framework. Elements of the various constituents of the learning encounter are itemized in order to assist professionals in analyzing the interaction between learner and situation. Features of the participants, the context and the learning process are included. A review of selected literature which touches on the issue of learning from urban resources is also provided. Writings that describe three different kinds of resources (museums, settlement houses, and the city as a built environment) are identified. It is suggested that educators could apply the urban resource framework to these works, in order to use the literature more creatively and systematically in their thinking about urban education. The challenge for educators, it is held, is to understand how people can learn from the city's non-school resources, and to create ways of enhancing that process. (Author/EB)

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Urban Resources as Educators

David Thornton Moore*

Almost without exception, the terms "urban education" and "community education" appear in the scholarly literature in the context of discussions of schools. The first term generally refers to "inner city" schools with "disadvantaged," "low-income," or "minority" student populations (cf. Passow, 1971; Smiley and Miller, 1968; Walberg and Kopan, 1972). The second term most often refers to the use of local schools by community people for a variety of educational programs (cf. Totten and Manley, 1969, on the Flint model). These uses are, of course, legitimate and even relatively clear. A problem arises, however, insofar as these two terms perpetuate the implicit assumption that education—or, more broadly, learning—happens only in the realm of schools. My purpose in this paper is to add my voice to those attempting to dispel that assumption and, more substantively, to propose a conceptual framework by which educators can recognize, affirm, and enhance the potential to learning of a vast array of urban resources wholly unconnected to schools.

In the first section of the paper, I will propose working definitions of the major terms 'educators," "resources," and "urban," noting some crucial dimensions of this type of analysis. In the second section, I will suggest a conceptual framework by which educators can identify, comprehend, and conceivably improve the salient features of learning encounters outside of schools. And in the last part, I will review some of the literature which speaks to the educational implications of various representative types of urban resources. Most of that literature, when it refers to education at all, uses a definition narrower than the one I favor. The purpose of the paper, therefore, is not to describe exhaustively all those urban resources which can be said to educate, but rather to offer and illustrate briefly a conceptual scheme by which one might approach any particular resource.

Some Working Definitions

Education. A review of the multitude of definitions of education lies beyond the scope of this paper. Two well-known formulations of the term differ, however, in a way which highlights one of the central issues in the analysis of urban resources as educators. In his classic *Democracy and Education* (1916), John Dewey writes:

> We thus reach a technical definition of education: It is that reconstruction or reorganization of experience which adds to the meaning of experience, and which increases the ability to direct the course of subsequent experience (p. 76).

Lawrence A. Cremin, in his recent *Public Education* (1976), defines education as:

> the deliberate, systematic and sustained effort to transmit, evoke or acquire knowledge, attitudes, values, skills and sensibilities and any learning that results from the effort, direct or indirect, intended or unintended.

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Dewey and Cremin agree that education is a process, a human activity which affects the cognitive and affective organization of mental operations: Through education, we learn somehow to make sense of the world more effectively. Education is *not* a body of knowledge or skills, or a set of characteristics possessed by "educated men and women." (I assume that Cremin means process, not outcome, in his use of the term "learning.")

Where the two definitions diverge is in Cremin's insistence on the *intentionality* of the educative process. The issue is this: To what extent must the process of education be "systematic, deliberate and sustained"? Can an educational experience be fortuitous, serendipitous, even unrecognized? Both definitions insist on the possibility of self-education, of learning without teachers (other than oneself) or schools, but Cremin maintains that the use of the term "education" (as distinct from the more general "learning" or "socialization") must be restricted to situations in which people *intend* to learn.

Now, for purposes of discussion, that limitation seems perfectly reasonable. As both Cremin and Hope Jensen Leichter (1974) point out, expanding the meaning of education to all learning runs the risk of encompassing all human activity. Nevertheless, I would argue two points. First, whether or not a particular instance of learning is intentional or systematic, educators ought to try to comprehend its nature. Second, they ought to seek to understand the conditions under which learning happens best, and then try to recreate, and support those conditions whenever and wherever it is feasible and desirable. In other words, educators must be willing to examine learning in many social contexts—whether it be in schools or museums, day-care centers or playgrounds—and ask themselves if they have a legitimate role in enhancing that process.

Another point remains to be made. Learning is a process which affects the cognitive and/or affective organization of mental operations of an individual; that is, its effects are internal. But the process itself is a function of, or is given its dynamic quality by, the interaction between the learner and the situation. The nature of the experience depends on what goes on between the two. Therefore, it makes no sense to speak of either the learner or the resource independent of the other. The educational meaning and potential effect of any experience reside not in the thing (context, object, facility) itself, but in the use made of it by the learner. Comments later in this paper regarding certain urban resources as educators must be understood in the light of that proposition.

For the purpose of this paper, then, I would favor a definition of education combining Dewey and Cremin but insisting on the possibility and importance of unintentional learning. "Educators," the word used in the title, can be defined in one sense as those people whose professional task it is to understand and facilitate the learning process. But in a broader sense (reflected in the definition of "resources" offered below), "educators" may be seen as anything from which people learn.

Resources. The concept of resource is considerably easier to handle than that of education. For the purposes of this discussion, "resources" will mean people, animals, objects, institutions, facilities, events, processes or problems which people can use to learn. Resources can be seen to vary in the extent to which (1) people are conscious of and intentional about being educated, and (2) professional educators can purposively manipulate the resources for the educational benefit of learners.

Intentionality is not a binary, yes or no issue. There is no question that teachers in schools intend to create conditions under which their students may learn. But much of their behavior transmits a "hidden curriculum" from which students learn—often beneath awareness—about such things as status, power, and rules for behaving. Moreover, their intentional teaching, sometimes fails to achieve its desired end. On the other end of the spectrum is, for instance, the street gang, an organization of adolescent males for whom education would seem to be the furthest thing from their minds. But who is to deny that these young men learn about such matters as status, power, and the rules for behaving? On occasion, one member may consciously instruct another in, say, techniques of basketball or breaking and entering. The group may evolve rituals for certain occasions and instruct their initiates in proper performance. While these interactions clearly involve learning, instruction per se is less important to participants than the game or ritual. A resource, then, may be used more or less intentionally for educational purposes.

The degree to which a particular resource may be manipulated purposively by a professional educator varies with the learner, with the situation, and with the purposes and skills of the educator. A skilled gang worker may transform an informal rap session into an educational experience by subtly raising questions of strategy, fact, or ethics. He may choose to leave a basketball game as it is, knowing that participants are learning about technique, teamwork, and self-esteem; and he may judge that meddling in the game for other educational purposes would backfire. An educator may come to comprehend a particular learning context and elect not to intervene, assessing the learning as adequate. In another case, the educator might choose to manipulate the conditions somehow, seeking to enhance the process. Being outside of the school

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system and often under the control of persons with motives unrelated to learning, certain urban resources may defy the intervention of even the most well-meaning and skillful educator. Others may prove surprisingly responsive.

Urban. To this point, nothing which has been said about either education or resources relates only to urban areas. Why is that word in the title? A city displays certain characteristics which may reflect in the number and nature of educational resources: large population; high density; considerable heterogeneity by race, ethnic background, religion, occupation, and temperament; mobility; concentration of commerce, technology, and cultural institutions. Such resources as a symphony, a major art museum, and a professional baseball club tend to exist only where there are sufficient people and money to support them. Similarly, settlement houses and major hospital centers are likely to be found only where a lot of people have social or health problems.

In an address to urban educators, Edmund Gordon (1975) referred to these social conditions as "urbanicity," and exhorted urban educators to recognize both the challenge and the stimulation inherent in city life. He pointed out that, in an area dense with vastly different people and institutions coming into contact day after day, interactions occur which could have tremendous educative power. He argued that educators must come to understand and account for the ways various people go about solving intellectual and social problems (their "cognitive gestalts"), as well as the differences in temperament which people bring to their encounters with learning situations.

The possibility, the stimulation, the excitement of learning in a city reside, of course, in the awesome array of resources. In an area no larger than some Kansas wheat farms one may find in New York City several world-renowned art and natural history museums, Lincoln Center with its orchestra, ballet, and opera, a commercial center, and Broadway, not to mention hundreds of thousands of people from fascinating and diverse cultural backgrounds. In a single (exhausting) day, one could learn about Egyptian art at the Metropolitan Museum, African agriculture at the Museum of Natural History, nineteenth-century paper boys at the New York Historical Society, electronic music at the Juilliard School Library, and glass blowing at the Steuben Glass shop on Fifth Avenue.

The challenge, the danger, the demand of learning in a city reside, on the other hand, in the tendency toward routine and the reaction against overstimulation. Human beings seek order in their lives, and too much change or stimulation can make them pull back, resist, ignore. Moreover, institutions display their own forms of rigidity, preventing people from moving outside the prescribed roles and behaviors. More than a few people who live within easy distance of the educational bonanza described above rarely use any of it. The availability of the options may make people feel more empowered, but if they never go to the museums, they cannot learn from them.

The task for urban educators, then, is several-fold: to locate and analyze learning settings outside of schools; to discover what various people bring to those resources in the way of cognitive gestalts and temperaments; to understand the nature of the interaction between learner and resource; and to determine when and if interventions might be useful and effective.

A Conceptual Framework

In considering the educational potential of any urban resource, professionals must analyze the interaction between learner and situation. The following paragraphs itemize some of the elements of the various constituents of the learning encounter.

Features of the participants. What does the learner bring to the interaction with the resource? One might consider such psychological issues as the stage of cognitive and affective development (Piaget, 1977; Erikson, 1963); temperament (Oliver, 1976); educative style (cf. Leichter, 1973). Age, sex, race, and ethnicity all might make a difference. Role relationships among participants, both independent of and within the given context, ought to be identified.

Features of the context. What is the organizational setting within which the encounter occurs? To what extent are participants' activities bound by normative rules? How are those rules formulated, transmitted and enforced? What is it that people *do* during the particular occasion (Erickson and Shultz, 1977)? What are the temporal and spatial features of the encounter (Hall, 1959, 1966)? Does it have to occur at a specific time, in a specific place?

Features of the learning process. What is the substance of the learning: knowledge, skills, attitudes, or values? Do participants attach some affect to the situation or to the substance/topic? How is the learning acknowledged, recognized, and used? To what extent can the learning be transferred to or informed by other situations in the participants' experience (cf. Bruner, 1973, Boocock, 1971)? How is the learning situation structurally linked to other contexts? What are the methods of instruction: modeling, lecturing, experiencing, reading, moving, talking? To what extent is the learning a deliberate, systematic, and sustained effort? What other functions does the interaction serve?

These questions constitute a base for understanding and any given learning resource as it is experienced by a particular set of people. The list is meant to be suggestive rather than exhaustive. In using it, one must resist the urge

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to reify the components, to accept the categories as analytically valid representations of phenomenal reality. The phenomenon we are examining is a coherent experience for the participant, not a static collection of discrete features. Moreover, separating the "participants" from the "context" and both of those from the "learning" is misleading to a degree: In terms of roles, activities, and organization, the participants and the context are in a sense mutually constitutive. The "learner" does not exist outside of the "learning context," and the incumbent of that role may in fact become "teacher" in another (or even the same) situation. Still, participants do bring something to the encounter, and the situation, insofar as it can be said to be "objective" (cf. Berger and Luckmann, 1966), places certain demands on and offers certain possibilities to the participant. This conceptual framework may help the educator understand the components of the learning process without leaping to glib conclusions about either the members or the outcomes.

Review of the Literature

In this section of the paper, I will review selected literatures which touch on the issue of learning from urban resources. After noting a few works which relate to the general conceptual problem, I will identify certain writings that describe three different kinds of resources: museums, settlement houses, and the city as a built environment. These three sets of resources provide examples which fall at different points on the spectra of intentionality and manipulability. The choices are meant to be suggestive and illustrative, not exhaustive. Virtually none of the listed readings approaches the problem from the perspective of the conceptual framework described above. My point is to encourage the reader to apply the framework—or at least some coherent theory of learning form urban resources—to the suggested literature, so as to be able to use the literature more creatively and systematically for thinking about urban education.

The general problem. There is very little scholarly literature on the general question of locating and analyzing urban resources which educate. Several kinds of writings speak to related issues. From a philosophical point of view John Dewey's classic works on education stand as the foundation on which the entire enterprise may stand. As Cremin (1976) notes, Dewey urged a theory of education which would explicate learning in all social settings, but his work focused on schools. Still, much of what he says in *Experience and Education* (1938), *Democracy and Education* (1916), and other major works can easily be applied to extrascholastic contexts. The essence of the argument, "learning through experience," can be creatively implemented (and, unfortunately, trivialized) in many urban situations. Two books by a colleague of Dewey's, Elsie Ripley Clapp, describe projects in rural areas which manifested his theories: *Community Schools in Action* (1939) and *The Use of Resources in Education* (1952).

A thorough, multifaceted, multilevel framework for understanding the connections among various educative institutions is proposed by Hope Jensen Leichter in "Families and Communities as Educators: Some Concepts of Relationship" (1978). She analyzes institutional relationships with such ideas as community, system, linkage and mediation, and education from the individual's perspective with the concepts of social networks, contexts or frames, and educative style. In the same issue of the *Teachers College Record*, J. W. Getzels suggests a more refined conception of "The Communities of Education" (1978). Both papers are particularly helpful.

Two recent critics of Western education, Ivan Illich and Everett Reimer, propose general principles for organizing learning without schools. In *Deschooling Society* (1970), Illich argues that we ought to restore education to the community in the form of interconnected systems of resources he calls "learning webs." Reimer's *School Is Dead* (1971) makes much the same point in similarly polemical terms.

Several types of schools make concerted use of community resources in their educational programs. One form, supported by the Mott Foundation in Flint, Michigan, is the "community school," which uses local school facilities as headquarters for a range of social and educational services; for a description, see Totten and Manley, *The Community School* (1969). Another form is the "school-without-walls," the alternative high school which bases its programs in a vast array of urban settings. The prototype of the genre, Philadelphia's Parkway Program, is described in detail in Bremer and Von Moschzisker's *The School without Walls* (1971) and Cox's *The City as a Schoolhouse* (1972).

Perhaps the most ingenious attempt to define the educational potential of urban resources is the *Yellow Pages of Learning Resources* (1972), a directory written by Richard Wurman for the Group for Environmental Discovery in Philadelphia. In alphabetical order, the book lists institutions, people, and processes from "accountant" to "zoo," and asks of each, "what can you learn from . . . ?" The author proposes questions, identifies issues and concepts, and encourages exploration. The introduction argues for an open-minded, imaginative, process-oriented attitude toward learning from and in the city.

Museums. One of the more explicitly educational resources in the city is the museum. Chartered as educational institutions, museums offer such programs as guided tours, lectures, classes, and trips; the exhibits themselves, of course, may be regarded as learning resources. Museums focus on different subject areas: art, science, history. They may be very specialized: New York has a museum of holographic art, a fire museum, a museum devoted to jazz. Some present the history, arts, and crafts of a specific ethnic group: for example, New York's Jewish Museum, Museum of the American Indian, and El Museo del Barrio.

Increasingly, museums are expending time and resources on enhancing the educational quality of their facilities and services. Over one hundred special programs are described in *The Art Museum as Educator: A Collection of Studies as Guides to Practice and Policy* (1978), edited by Barbara Newsom and Adele Silver. Introductory articles in the book review some of the classic debates in art museum education. For instance, is the primary function of the

museum custodial—the preservation of works of art—or educational—making art physically and intellectually accessible to the public? Another issue relates to the charge of cultural imperialism hurled at art museums by members of some minority groups. To what extent should museums try to "elevate" and "humanize" the masses? Should museums present and teach about those pieces they judge "the best" according to classical Western European standards, or should they collect and display the artistic creations of people from minority, underclass, and Third World communities? Moreover, the pedagogic strategies of art educators in museums receive critical attention in the book. The authors praise the drift toward a balance between art appreciation and art as a developmental activity, with an increasingly participatory thrust. This book contains superb bibliographies for the interested reader, as well as profiling museum education programs which relate museums to schools, artists, and communities.

Other general works on museum education provide insights into the theory and implementation of programs. UNESCO published a collection of essays under the title *Museums, Imagination and Education* (1973). In one of the essays, "Changing Museums in a Changing World," Renée Marcousé stresses the importance of direct involvement and personal discovery through museums as a way of learning to see and think. In another essay, "Museums—Teachers, Students, Children," D. V. Proctor calls for more active participation by children in museum programs. Mark Luca offers a brief but useful bibliography on "The Museum as Educator." An older collection of articles on education in museums—the dimensions, the existing situation, the reasons for concern and the methods of presentation and analysis—is Eric Larabee's *Museums and Education* (1968). Sherman Lee's collection, *On Understanding Art Museums* (1975), considers the history and organization of museums from a variety of perspectives. One particularly lovely piece is Robert Coles' "The Art Museum and the Pressures of Society," which describes the reactions of black children from Boston to their first encounters with fine arts museums.

Settlement houses and neighborhood associations. Another formal organization in the city which might be considered educational is the settlement house or neighborhood association. In fact, a wide range of social service institutions—hospitals, visiting nurse services, housing departments, family therapy institutes, child guidance clinics—educate in various ways. Settlement houses are representative of this type. Some of the services are explicitly and self-consciously educational: Lenox Hill Neighborhood Association on New York's Upper East Side, for instance, has classes in swimming for youngsters, crafts for adults, gardening for senior citizens. Others are designed as services which will help people solve problems or meet conditions; but to the extent that such services enable people to mobilize their own resources to understand and confront issues in their lives, they can be called educational. Lenox Hill provides educational services relating to health, housing, community organization, single parenthood. An outreach program for older people informs them about available social services and facilities.

As an institutional type, the settlement house has a long history. Early efforts in this country focused on many educational projects to improve the quality of life in poor neighborhoods. Jane Addams' classic, *Twenty Years at Hull House* (1910), still stands as one of the best statements of the philosophy and practice of settlement work. A more recent historical treatment of the settlement as one manifestation of the progressive movement in the United States is Allen Davis's *Spearheads for Reform* (1967). Alan Twelvetrees' *Community Associations and Centres* (1976) studies programs and services in England, and gives some consideration to educational functions.

In addition to the extensive literature for social workers on community organization, there is a growing body of writing on the use of neighborhoods as a base for social change. In *Neighborhood Organization and Interest Group Processes* (1975), David O'Brien articulates some principles for organizing the poor around self-interest issues; he does not speak directly of educational programs, but the connections are easily made. Julian Greifer's collection, *Community Action for Social Change* (1974), reviews current projects in housing, employment, day care, youth work, and citizen participation. Education is not an explicit focus, but the book starts with a quotation from John Dewey concerning the definition of education. For one social work perspective on the subject, see John Turner, editor, *Neighborhood Organization for Community Action* (1968).

The city as a built environment. On the less explicit end of the learning spectrum, people in cities (as elsewhere) interact with the physical environment in such a way as to acquire certain conceptions of space. The encounter is rarely initiated, intended, or experienced as educational; people do not consciously set out, except perhaps when they are new to a city, to learn about orientation, building types and uses, routes and centers. Rather, they perceive the urban environment as a given which they must confront in their daily lives. How people learn to manage the confrontation, out-of-awareness as the education may be, is a fascinating problem which is receiving more and more scholarly attention.

The classic work on how people learn spatial relations in general is Jean Piaget and Bärbel Inhelder's *The Child's Conception of Space* (1967). The authors show how children move from "haptic" perception (recognizing objects by means of touch) to the use of such primitive relations as proximity and separation, order, enclosure and continuity. From there the child develops conceptions of "projective" and "euclidean" space, in which objects are related to one another in a general perspective or projective system or according to coordinate axes. Such relations depend on a general system of organization. For a more recent technical treatment of the same issues, see *The Development of the Conception of Space in the Child* (1970), by Monique Laurendeau and Adrien Pinard.

The use of these general conceptual skills in perceiving the urban environment is analyzed and described in a series of articles edited by Roger Downs and David Stea called *Image and Environment: Cognitive Mapping and Spatial Behavior* (1973). In one of the articles, "Notes on Urban Perception and Knowledge," Donald Appleyard claims

that people use three dominant types of perception in making sense of city space: operational (how it is used); responsive (passive reaction to particular features); and inferential (educated guesses based on past experience). Peter Orleans argues in "Differential Cognition of Urban Residents" that one's knowledge of the spatial environment is affected by scale and that city residents have perceptions of space different from those of rural people, shaped by uses, contacts, and involvements. Roger Hart and Gary Moore review the literature on the development of spatial cognition. All the articles contain excellent bibliographies. Another major work on how people perceive urban space is Kevin Lynch's *The Image of the City* (1960). In *Personal Space* (1969) and *Tight Spaces* (1974), Robert Sommer develops a theory of the relation between people and space which has profound implications for designers. A collection of articles edited by Harold Proshansky, William Ittleson, and Leanne Rivlin called *Environmental Psychology: Man and His Physical Setting* (1970) considers theoretical conceptions, psychological processes, social institutions, and planning and design; it is perhaps the most thorough review of the field. Edward T. Hall considers the cultural meaning of the various uses of space in *The Silent Language* (1959) and *The Hidden Dimension* (1966); his work pioneered the field of proxemics.

Concluding Remarks

My argument has been that educators must recognize, comprehend and appreciate the learning which occurs when people encounter a variety of urban resources; and that they can utilize certain concepts concerning that encounter—features of the participants, features of the situation, features of the learning process—to think about potential roles for themselves in enhancing the educative value of the interaction. Museums educate explicitly—as do a wealth of other urban institutions—and educators play an increasingly important part in their design. Settlement houses and other social service organizations perform broadly educational functions, even if peripherally to their primary objectives. I believe that educators could help such institutions teach people how to improve their lives in the city. Unconsciously or less explicitly, people learn from the buildings, the parks, the physical features of the urban environment. Whether that process needs intervention by educators is a question open to debate—although some schools already offer environmental studies programs—but clearly professionals need to know how people develop and use their conceptions of space.

The city provides a particularly rich educational environment. With its density and diversity of human populations, with its high concentration of technological, commercial, and cultural institutions, with its peculiarly nagging problems and its especially stimulating strengths, the city spawns educational resources without half trying. The challenge for educators is to understand how people learn from those resources and to create ways of enhancing that process.

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